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return. Opportunities are always with us; it is for us to see how we can make the best use of them.

The CHAIRMAN: The discussion of this subject will be continued by Miss CLARA E. HOWARD of the Carnegie library, Pittsburgh, who will speak on

#### THE BRANCH LIBRARY AND ITS RELATION TO THE DISTRICT

Within the past ten years the duties of a branch librarian in Pittsburgh have changed. When the branches were first opened it was found necessary to keep a great many records, but since the running machinery is in order, many of the details of the organization have been done away with. At present the only records kept are those which are not obtainable at the central library. The branches depend upon the central for figures of additions and number of volumes in their collections, and the central expects from the branches only those figures for which the branch is responsible. The monthly and annual statistical reports of each branch are now compiled in the central office where they have an adding machine. As much routine as possible has been done away with and as our books come to us already accessioned, shelflisted and cataloged it remains for us only to check our orders, file our cards and get our books into circulation.

The object of this change was, first to do away with unnecessary duplication of work, and secondly to give the branch librarian more time for field work which is much more vital. In some of the fundamental principles a certain amount of uniformity is required, but as the eight branch districts in Pittsburgh are so different and individual, it is the policy of the library to give the branch librarian full power to develop the district as she may see fit, so long as she keeps within her appropriation and the general policy of the library system. She has no limits except the physical ones, the size of her building and staff. She is made to feel that the library board and the librarian particularly are in

sympathy with what she is trying to do, and that she has their hearty coöperation. She becomes a part of the community in which she works, and is vitally interested in all its activities. In this respect a branch library closely resembles a library in a small community.

The Wylie Avenue Branch is situated in the heart of what is known as the "Hill District." At one time this was a very well-to-do part of Pittsburgh with substantial and well built homes, but for the most part this better class of people, the old families and even the lower middle class have left the district, and their places have been taken by foreigners and negroes. The homes were originally built for one or two families, but they have been changed to such an extent that we now find five or six families occupying the same building. Many of the parlors have been turned into storerooms and here we find tailors, grocers, butchers, bakers and toby-makers who make up the trades people of the neighborhood. The entire neighborhood is badly congested, and it is a common occurrence for a family to move five or six times a year in their efforts to find more livable quarters.

The nationalities represented at the branch are American, English, Jewish, Russian, German, Austrian, Italian, Roumanian, Hungarian, French, Negro, Scotch, and Irish. The district is essentially Jewish, but the people are divided into groups of German Jews, Russian Jews and Roumanian Jews, so there is a lack of community life and community interest. Few women among the foreigners use the library. Either they are suspicious of all reading on account of the years of oppression in their native land, or they have very little time from their household drudgery or they do not know how to read. The foreign men seem more anxious to get books in their native languages and read constantly. The library has been working to get a good collection of books in the foreign languages, as they are now looked upon as a means of establishing a home feeling in a new country where the foreigner can be brought into a sympathetic

understanding of our life and institutions. The public school looks after the children of the aliens, but the parents land in America when they are beyond the age of the elementary school and very often the only way they can learn is through unpleasant experiences. Books which tell the parent that it is against the law to send his child to work before he is fourteen, what the taxes are for and where they go, where to get naturalization papers and questions of similar nature save the foreigner a great deal of embarrassment at times and render him a service which he does not soon forget. It is really marvelous how readily the foreigners do assimilate. They are quick to learn and many times their efforts to secure an education after they are advanced in years is pathetic. They want to learn English and will even ask for a copy of the alphabet that they may learn to read and write at home. Primers, first and second readers are in constant demand by the parents, and the library buys all the so-called "Helps to Foreigners" that can be procured.

One of the most important agencies of the district is of course the public school. Regular visits are planned in the fall when the schools are well started to meet the principal and new teachers, to tell them about the library and its catalogs especially The Children's Catalog and Graded List of Books for use in the schools, the picture collection and the books on the Teachers' Reading Circle list. Our plan of coöperation is explained and the teachers are usually most cordial. One of the strongest points that we try to make is to get the teachers to notify us in advance if they are to assign a special topic for composition work or outside reading so that we may have the material looked up before the children come in for it. If the principal is willing, and usually she is most anxious for us to visit the different rooms, we tell the children about the library, how they may get cards to take books home and that the library has many books which their fathers and mothers might like. An announcement is also made at this time of the story hours for the little children

and the older boys and girls. If requested to do so, we tell stories in the different rooms. In my own district we visit the schools only once a year, as each visit brings in such overwhelming results that we cannot take care of all who come. We also feel that we might wear out our welcome if we visited more often. Friendly visits are made at other times, however, to see the work of the school.

An arrangement is also made whenever possible with the two high schools in the district to enable us to have the material looked up and reserved before the demand comes.

A very progressive night school is also conducted in one of our schools, designed especially to meet the needs of foreigners. The enrollment is 1,200 and 29 nationalities are represented. Old men and women, husbands and wives and half-grown children eager to learn take advantage of every opportunity. A great many of the teachers are regular borrowers at the branch and have asked for coöperation with their evening classes. Debates, recitations and questions in civics are looked up for them and a list of good books for foreigners to read after they have reached a certain degree of proficiency in English is about to be prepared.

There are two large and very active social settlements in the districts. Kingsley House conducts many classes in gymnasium work, basketry and bead work, sewing, dressmaking, typewriting and stenography, telegraphy, domestic science, manual training, weaving and dancing and the library is constantly called upon for books along these lines. Just now the residents are making their plans to open their summer home, about twenty miles in the country, where they entertain parties of 250 for two weeks at a time from the poorer districts of the city from June to October, besides many hundreds of visitors who go for one day only. The instructor in manual training is having the boys make kites, stilts and bird houses and such things that will be used in the country, and the library was asked to furnish patterns and designs for this work.

We are also going to furnish a case of books about insects, birds, flowers and trees and a general collection of books for the children and mothers for use during their stay at the summer home.

The other settlement is Jewish entirely and much of the class work is among foreigners who have recently come to the city. The Jewish children are very precocious and much of the work done for them is along the line of debating clubs and literary societies. This settlement has a large reading room for the use of the members, but for the most part the collection consists of books for recreation so that practically all of the reference work for the clubs is done at the branch.

In this connection I may mention a serious defect of the branch library system and that is the lack of a Poole set of magazines kept at the branch. It is out of the question to buy a complete set even were there room at each branch to store it. The borrowers usually want the information right away and are unwilling to pay the car fare necessary to get to the central library, nor do they want to wait until the messenger can bring it. At present we have messenger service three times a week, but we hope some day to have a daily messenger and this will in a way alleviate this difficulty. We have estimated for this for several years, but the final appropriation has not warranted it.

Each of the settlements has one or two friendly visitors and nurses with whom we coöperate. If children come to the library and we think they need attention or medical aid we find out which settlement they attend and ask the nurse of that settlement to look after them. If not a member of either settlement we refer all Jewish cases to one and the rest to the other settlement.

We are occasionally called upon to look after some of the proteges of the Juvenile Court who are released upon probation. They are allowed to come to the library for books and the assistants at the branch make a special effort to see that they get the proper sort of books.

A children's librarian is occasionally sent

down to the Temporary Home for Children to tell stories and the matron has at times brought the children to the regular branch for story hour.

The Boy Scout movement has recently developed in Pittsburgh and within the neighborhood there are several patrols already established. This gives rise to the demand for Boy Scout books and also books on allied subjects such as camp-life, fishing and hunting.

Besides the foreigners in the Hill District there is also a large colored population. Very little is done for them in the city. While the settlements do not actually bar their doors against them the negroes do not feel free to avail themselves of the privileges. The playground of the district admits them because it is more or less a city institution, but they have found that separate classes for them is the best plan.

The library conducts a study club for colored women. The work taken up is literary in character and prominent men and women, both colored and white, have given their services for an evening's entertainment. For the basis of good work the club membership is limited to twenty-five, and all vacancies are filled from a waiting list. The members are the better class negroes, and most of the young women are employed in some kind of work, such as hair-dressing, dressmaking, stenography or general office work. While most of the members come from the district around the branch a few are from the surrounding suburbs. The club is looked upon as one of the social organizations of the city, its meetings are announced from the pulpits, and at the annual open meeting there is usually a very representative negro audience. A list of books of interest to colored people was at one time sent to the local colored newspaper and this list has appeared weekly with the call number of the books. There was also an editorial urging the men and women to become familiar with the books which were to be found in the library.

So far I have spoken only of the work that has been accomplished at the Wylie

Avenue Branch. We feel that very little has been done to advertise the library because we have been handicapped by the size of our building and staff. The greatest problem has been to handle effectively the crowds that come of their own accord, for during the busy months our attendance is often over two thousand a day. We are looking forward to the time when our building can be enlarged, when we can take a more active interest in the district working especially through the toby-factories.

The other branches in the city have worked along different lines. The West End Branch has reached good results through several clubs conducted by the branch. South Side, which is in a great mill district, has found it advisable to open the branch as a social meeting-place for the men, and very crude quarters are provided for them in the basement, where they may smoke if they wish. In the Homewood district the Board of Trade has been very much interested in the branch and its work, and there has been active coöperation with the Homewood Civic Club. The East Liberty Branch has coöperated with the local Board of Trade of that district and one of the strongest allies has been the churches. Mothers' meetings have also been a potent factor.

The problems of the branches are so many and so diversified that once a week the branch librarians meet with the superintendent of adult circulation to talk them over and make such recommendations as seem feasible. This meeting follows the regular weekly book order meeting. Once a month a meeting is held of all leading department assistants who can be spared and still keep the branches running. At this time there are usually one or two speakers from outside the field and one speaker from the library staff who tells of the special work she is trying to do. These meetings are planned to keep the assistants in touch with what is going on in their own library and round about them.

The CHAIRMAN: The subject of branch libraries has been rarely treated in the programs of the Association and is certain-

ly one of the live questions, because I recollect reading, within the last two or three months, such very opposite opinions on the question of the use of our small parks for branches, as that of Chicago, which is enthusiastic over it, and that of Boston, which repudiates it entirely. The Association might well have a most interesting discussion following this paper, yet I feel obliged to remind the Association that they were very dilatory in assembling and there remains no time for such discussion. We are to have the pleasure of hearing an address on "The 'Eternal Or' of the librarian," from Mr. FRANCIS F. BROWNE, editor of "The Dial." I don't think that in an assemblage of librarians it is necessary for the chairman to refer to the position of "The Dial" as a literary paper. I need only recall the remark of a Bostonian of the Bostonians, the late Dr. William Everett, when he suggested that he would consider it a greater honor to write for "The Dial" than for the New York "Nation." More than that cannot be said.

#### THE ETERNAL "OR" OF THE LIBRARIAN

It could hardly be without a savor of presumption that one quite outside the field of practical library work should venture to address a great body of experienced librarians on matters pertaining to any phase of library administration. Something of the disdain with which Othello spoke of one who "never set a squadron in the field, nor the division of a battle knows" might well be aroused among librarians at the pretense of instruction from one whose practical knowledge of library work is almost *nil*—who never set a book-stack in its place, nor knows the divisions of the Decimal Classification. But as libraries are made of books, and the collecting and dispensing of these is the chief end and aim of the librarian's life, there may be points of interest between him and one whose work, in quite a different way, has been concerned with books,—who, like the librarian, has lived his life among them;